

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, and 4-20 are currently pending, with claim 1 being independent. Initially, Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claim 3 contains allowable subject matter. Without conceding the propriety of the rejections, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 and claim 3 has been cancelled merely to expedite prosecution. Applicants have not disclaimed or abandoned any subject matter and expressly reserve the right to file one or more continuation applications directed to any subject matter removed from the claims or not expressly claimed by way of the present amendment.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the outstanding rejections in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by Vandromme et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,752,627). As noted above, without conceding the propriety of the rejection, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 and claim 3 has been cancelled merely to expedite prosecution. Applicants note that claim 3 has been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) has been obviated and respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 6-8, 11, 12, and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Vandromme et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,752,627) in view of Obrist (U.S. Patent No. 4,673,107). Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Vandromme et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,752,627) in view of Connan et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,954,234).

As noted above, without conceding the propriety of the rejections, claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 and claim 3 has been cancelled merely to expedite prosecution. Applicants note that claim 3 has been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) have been obviated and respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn.

Conclusion

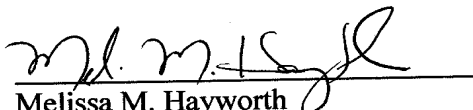
Without conceding the propriety of the rejections, the claims have been amended as noted above to expedite prosecution and pursue an allowance. For the reasons noted above, the art of record does not disclose or suggest the inventive concept of the present invention as defined by the claims. All claims are now in condition for allowance and a Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested.

In the event that there are any questions relating to this amendment or the application, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution may be expedited.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket # 103998.B130063).

Respectfully submitted,

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Melissa M. Hayworth
Registration No. 45,774

CROWELL & MORING LLP
Intellectual Property Group
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844